

# THE NEXT CHAPTER NEWSLETTER | JUNE 2025

A Democratic Party Newsletter Made for and by Gratiot County Members  
Chief Editors, Nancy O'Brien & Lisa Gregory



## *Chair Chat* By Christie Freestone

**“Trump calls it ‘One Big, Beautiful Bill,’ but it may be the ugliest legislation we’ve ever seen . . . causing one of the largest wealth transfers from working and middle-class families to the wealthy in U.S. history.”**

**--Food & Water Watch, a national advocacy group**

Let’s be honest: a lot of folks in our county still support Donald Trump. We’re a small, rural county full of hard-working families, proud farmers, and close-knit communities. We take care of each other. But the truth is, Trump’s new “Big Beautiful Bill” is really a “Big, Ugly Threat” to Gratiot County.

So what’s in the bill? In short: massive cuts to Medicaid, restrictions on immigration, and slashes to public education funding. That’s just the start.

Let’s talk about Medicaid. Our local hospital, MyMichigan Medical Center-Gratiot, depends on Medicaid for approximately 60% of its funding. That’s not just some budget line — that’s seniors, disabled folks, low-income families, and veterans getting care. If those Medicaid dollars disappear, we’re talking layoffs, closed units, and eventually the loss of our only hospital. What happens when the ER is 30 miles away instead of 3? People die waiting. That’s not alarmist. It’s reality.

Then there’s the immigration crackdown. Everyone around here knows that many immigrants work on our local farms. Immigrants — some of them seasonal, many undocumented — are picking crops, milking cows, cleaning barns. Without them, our farms don’t function. Period. Trump’s bill threatens to choke off that labor force completely, with strict visa caps, harsher enforcement, and zero support for farm labor reform. That’s not helping farmers — it’s putting them out of business.

Our schools aren’t safe either. Gratiot County has seven school districts, the Gratiot-Isabella RESD and Alma College — all of them facing funding losses if this bill guts federal support for public education. Special education, school lunches, career tech programs, and grants for college-bound students are all on the chopping block. If you care about giving your kids or grandkids a decent shot at life, this bill makes that harder.

So why do people still support Trump? A lot of it is branding — he says the right things, makes folks feel heard, and gives them someone to blame. But while he’s busy pointing fingers, he’s quietly pushing policies that hit rural communities the hardest. We can’t absorb these cuts. We feel them immediately. So what can we do?

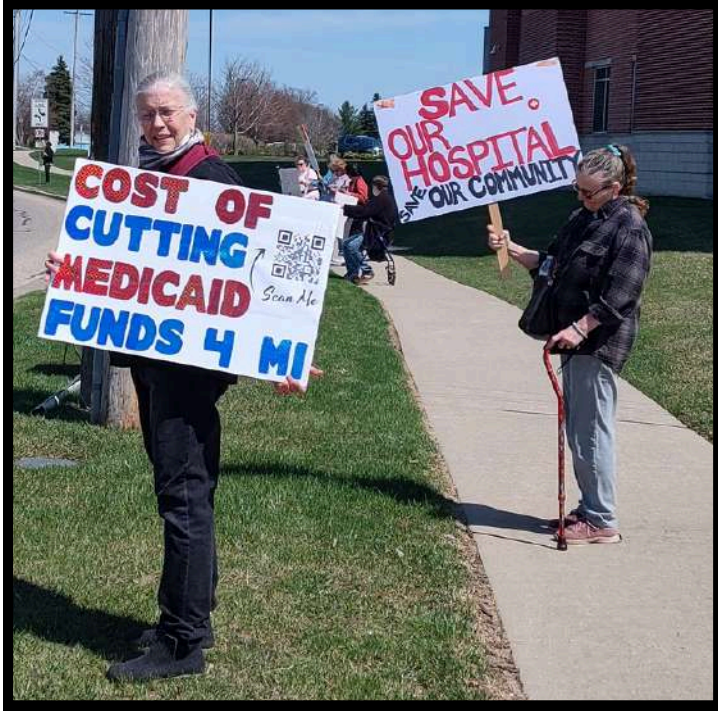
- Talk to your neighbors. Share the facts. Make it personal. Ask them, “What happens if the hospital closes? If your grandkids lose their teacher? If your farm can’t find workers?” These are not abstract fears.
- Contact your state and federal representatives — even the Republican ones. They need to hear from rural voters who see the damage this bill will cause.
- Organize. Write letters to the editor, attend protest marches, and show up at school board meetings. We need visible, vocal opposition.

Finally, we need you to vote in the next election. We can’t keep electing people who pass bills that harm us.

# Gratiot County Democrats March for Democracy and More

## March for Health

Thank you to all of our members and friends who came out April 22 to march in front of the Alma Hospital to protect our healthcare. Rural counties are worried about the future of their hospitals because of cuts to Medicare and Medicaid



## March to Protect Social Security

Gratiot County Dems and friends joined to march to protect Social Security May 5 on Wright Ave. in Alma. We had about 40 people join in and received a very positive response.





# Spotlight on Community Impact: Lori Johnson Presents on EightCAP Services and the Future of Head Start



**Lori Johnson , President  
EightCAP, Inc.**

In a recent engaging and informative presentation, Lori Johnson, President of EightCAP, shared valuable insights into the vital role EightCAP plays in our region and discussed the future of key programs, including Head Start

EightCAP provides a range of services including early childhood education, housing assistance, employment support, and emergency services. Johnson highlighted how these programs work together to address both immediate needs and long-term self-sufficiency.

Lori Johnson's presentation served as both a reminder and a call to action—emphasizing the essential role of EightCAP and the urgent need to protect programs that make a lasting difference.

GCDP members who attended found the presentation very informative. We appreciate the opportunity to learn about our community programs and how to defend them.



# Highland Festival Parade

Our float in the Highland Festival Parade, driven by Marc Raycraft, was a great success. Six Dems threw bead necklaces and candy to the crowd. We also had small dog bone snack bags which we tossed to dog owners. The reception was very positive with thumbs up, cheers and much applause.



# Gratiot Democratic Party Hosts Informational Event for Potential Candidates

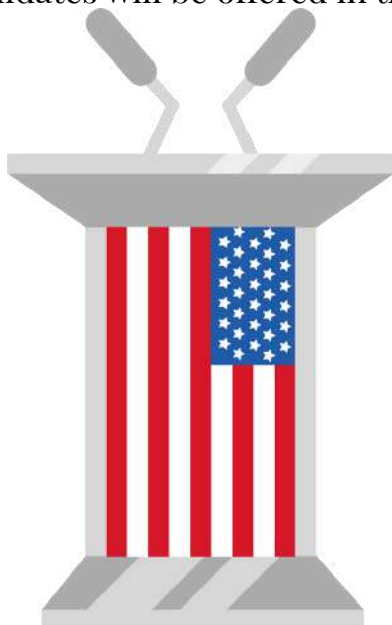
On June 10, the Gratiot County Democratic Party held a successful Potential Candidate Informational Event at the Alma Public Library. The event, held from 5:00–6:30 p.m., welcomed approximately 20 community members interested in learning about running for public office in the 2026 election.

The evening began with opening remarks and an informative presentation by Gratiot County Clerk Angie Thompson. She provided essential details about the positions up for election—including City Commissioner, School Board Member, and Precinct Delegate—as well as filing deadlines and responsibilities of each role.

Attendees had the opportunity to speak directly with current and former officeholders. Representing City Commissions were Drew Bare, Clark Hubbard, and Laurie Harrison. School Board insight was provided by Justin Barnaby, while Nancy O'Brien and Sarah Foltz shared information about Precinct Delegates. Although not an elected position, poll worker information was also available, shared by longtime election volunteer Caroline DeGraaf.

The event was co-planned by Al Bartholomew, Chairperson of the Candidate and Elections Committee. Coincidentally, it was also Al's birthday, and the evening ended on a celebratory note with cake and birthday wishes.

This event marks an important step in the Gratiot Democratic Party's ongoing efforts to educate and support future leaders. Additional training opportunities for prospective candidates will be offered in the coming months.



# March to Protect Veterans' Jobs and Healthcare



# No Kings in the USA



# The Next Chapter: A Book Club By Nancy O'Brien

## *Becoming Madam Secretary* By Stephanie Dray

The Next Chapter Book Club met on May 3 to discuss this historical fiction novel about Frances Perkins, the first woman in a Presidential Cabinet. She was appointed the Secretary of Labor by Franklin D. Roosevelt during his first administration, and remained in office from 1933-1945. Frances played a key role in developing and implementing many New Deal programs, including Social Security. She was a strong advocate for workers' rights and was a big supporter of Roosevelt's policies.

This was a fascinating read and echoes many of the current politics in the United States today. This book explored her background and private life, which made her pioneering spirit and work ethic more understandable. We rated this novel a unanimous 5.0 out of 5 stars.

## *Listen for the Lie* By Amy Tintera

On June 7, our book club met and discussed this twisty murder mystery and darkly comical novel. What if you had spent the last ten years believing that you had murdered your best friend because you don't remember anything about that night? That is the premise of this book. A podcast debuts bringing the true crime back into the spotlight, endeavoring to solve the mystery. Lucy, the main character, is forced to relive the whole story while visiting her hometown for her grandmother's birthday.

There are plenty of suspects in the small town and the twists in the plot make it a fun whodunit to read and discuss. Our book club rated it a 4.0 out of 5 stars. If you like reading about a smart, strong, somewhat neurotic woman with some snappy dialogue, you might like this book.

As always, these books are available at Ballyhoo Books in Alma. Our book club is taking a break in July but returning with a special book club meeting on August 2 at the Lincoln Road Methodist Church for two reasons: to discuss 2 books *The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn and *Wrong Place Wrong Time* by Gillian McAllister, and to participate in a mystery book club sale (cash only!) from 10-2PM. Lunch will be available, along with snacks like cotton candy and homemade ice cream, and some unique vendors.

**Please join us!**

## 2025 BOOK CLUB CHOICES

JULY 12

*The Briar Club*

Kate Quinn

AUGUST 2

*Wrong Place Wrong Time*

Gillian McAllister

SEPTEMBER 6

*The Woman with the Cure*

Lynn Cullen

OCTOBER 4

*The Giver of Stars*

Jojo Moyes

NOVEMBER 1

*The Ballerina of Auschwitz*

Edith Eger

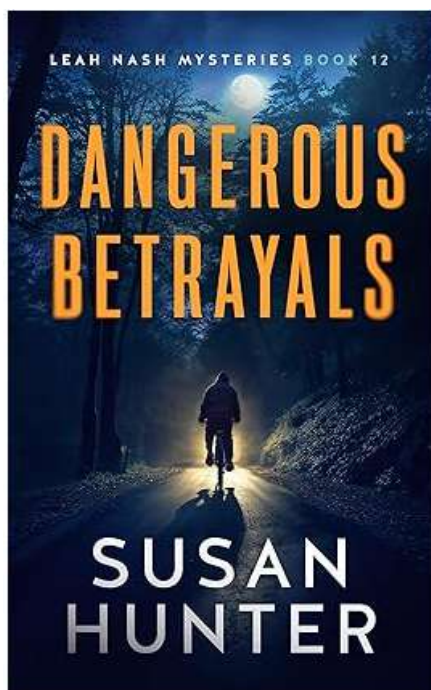
DECEMBER 6

*Christmas Bells*

Jennifer Chiaverini

## Local Talent Shines: Susan Hunter Publishes Twelfth Book in Popular Mystery Series

Congratulations to local author Susan Hunter on the release of her latest novel, *Dangerous Betrayals*, the twelfth installment in the popular Leah Nash mystery series. With her trademark twists and sharp storytelling, Hunter once again delivers a gripping tale that keeps readers on the edge of their seats. . We celebrate Susan's continued success and look forward to many more captivating stories to come!



### *Block House Trivia*



**First place!**

**Join us  
Wednesday  
nights at 7:00  
for trivia.**

**JOIN US**

# The Future of Our Schools: Funding Changes and Their Local Impact

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- How our RESD operates
- School finance basics
- Running a school district: How is it financed and who's in charge of school funding decisions?
- Funding cuts that we have faced and how potential cuts will affect services



**PAUL HUNGERFORD**  
Gratiot-Isabella RESD  
Superintendent

**MONDAY, JUNE 23**  
**6:00-7:00 PM**

**THOMPSON HOME**  
**PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**ITHACA, MI**

**You're  
Invited!**

**Have coffee with us!**



# Coffee with the Dems

**Join us the first  
Tuesday  
of each month**

**July 1 | August 5 | Sept 2**

**9AM**

**Ballyhoo Books  
Alma**



# **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

# **Adopt-a-Highway**

## **Saturday, July 12 || 9:00AM**

Join team DASH (Democrats Against Sloppy Highways) as part of MDOT's Adopt-a-Highway program.

If you can help, call our office by Wednesday, July 9 at 989-285-1212 and leave your name and phone number. Our program coordinator will contact you with details. All equipment will be provided.



# Drinks with Dems

Stop in to share a beverage and chat about current issues.

**JULY 15 | AUG 26**  
**ALMA BREWING**  
**COMPANY**  
**7:00 PM**



All are welcome!



Please save THE DATE TO JOIN  
THE MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF THE  
GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY FOR THEIR...

**ANNUAL**

# picnic

THURSDAY AUGUST 21, 2025

6:00 P.M. - DUSK

**Pie Auction (To Benefit the Dems!)  
Best Burger Cookoff Contest  
Door prize Give-Aways and More!**



- WE WILL BE GRILLING UP HOTDOGS, & SERVING POP/LEMONADE •
- PLEASE BRING A DISH TO SHARE & A CHAIR

## Let's Grill & Chill!

*Raycraft Farm - 5652 West Adams Road - Alma*  
*Call Renee @ 989-463-8530 to RSVP*

**FEEL FREE TO BYOB OR PREFERRED BEVERAGES**





## DONATE YOUR UNWANTED ITEMS

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE ANNUAL OPERATIONS OF  
THE GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC HEADQUARTERS

### ITEMS WANTED:

BOOKS  
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS  
GAMES & TOYS  
FURNITURE/APPLIANCES/TOOLS, ETC.  
CLOTHING  
SPORTS EQUIPMENT/MISC. AND MORE...**EVEN THE KITCHEN SINK!**

**VOLUNTEERS...gladly accepted!**

**Saturday ~ September 6, 2025 ~ 9 am - 5 pm**  
**221 Hastings Street Alma**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL:  
RENÉE/ARTHUR 989-463-8530 or CAROLINE 989-560-1349

# Office Volunteers Needed

**CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO  
VOLUNTEER AS AN OFFICE WORKER**

We are seeking volunteers to staff our office Wednesdays from 4-6 and Saturdays from 10-12. Even committing to one shift per month will be a great help. In the difficult times ahead, we want to be available.

Sign up using the link, or contact us at 989-285-1212.



**Spend 5 minutes, make 5 calls**  
**Make your voice heard**

**[5calls.org](http://5calls.org)**



**Find and contact your elected  
officials** Use USA Gov's Contact

Use USA Gov's Contact Your Elected Officials tool to get contact information for your members of Congress, the president, and state and local officials.

[usa.gov/elected-officials](http://usa.gov/elected-officials)

## Report Social Security Disruptions



Attorney General Dana Nessel is increasingly concerned about any disruption in social security for Michiganders. If you have experienced any unusual disruption in your social security services or you have been prevented from accessing your earned benefits, we urge you to report these issues here.

The Department of Attorney General may use the information collected for future federal actions and will not share personal identifying information without consent. Residents who seek assistance with their Social Security claims or benefits should contact their representative in the U.S. House of Representatives or Michigan's U.S. Senators for assistance.

The Department of Attorney General is a state agency and is unable to provide direct assistance.



### Read petitions carefully before signing!

MICHIGAN:  
**DECLINE TO SIGN**  
ANTI-VOTING BALLOT PETITION INITIATIVE

THE "AMERICANS FOR CITIZEN VOTING - MICHIGAN" CAMPAIGN will create obstacles that prevent millions of eligible Michigan voters from participating in our democracy.

ACLU MI

## A NEW TOOL TO HELP YOU STAY INFORMED!



Check your registration status



Connect with your county party



Find your local representatives



Keep up with local events like town halls and protests

CHECK OUT  MLvoter.org

MI  
DEMS

How is the Trump Administration affecting  
You • Your family • Your community

Tell us

# YOUR STORY

Go to [michigandems.com/mystory](http://michigandems.com/mystory)

MI  
DEMS

# EVENTS



- **June 20** - Protest at Carson City Hospital - 3:00-5:00PM
  - **June 23** - The Future of School Funding  
6:00 PM - Ithaca Library
  
  - **July 1** - Coffee with the Dems  
9:00 AM - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma
  - **July 12 -20** - Adopt-a-Highway
  - **July 15** - Drinks with the Dems  
7:00 PM - Alma Brewing Company
  - **July 21** - GCDP General Membership Meeting  
7:00 PM - Gratiot Dems office
  
  - **August 2** - The Next Chapter Book Club  
10:00 AM - Lincoln Road Methodist Church
  - **August 5** - Coffee with the Dems  
9:00 AM - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma
  - **August 18** - GCDP General Membership Meeting  
7:00 PM - Gratiot Dems office
  - **August 21** - GCDP Picnic  
5:00 PM - Marc Raycraft Farm
  - **August 26** - Drinks with the Dems  
7:00 PM - Alma Brewing Company
  
  - **September 6** - GCDP Garage Sale - 9:00 AM  
The Next Chapter Book Club - 10:00 AM
- \*Trivia Every Wednesday | 7PM - The Block House in Alma**

[CLICK HERE OR  
SCAN THE CODE  
TO VISIT OUR  
CALENDAR!](#)



FOLLOW, SHARE, AND LIKE US  
ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[CLICK HERE OR  
SCAN THE CODE  
TO VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE](#)



**OFFICE HOURS:**  
Wednesday | 4 p.m.-6 p.m.  
Saturdays | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Gratiot County Democratic Office  
1686 Wright Ave.  
P.O. Box 154  
Alma, MI

**CONTACT: 989-285-1212**  
[gratiotdems@gmail.com](mailto:gratiotdems@gmail.com)  
[gratiotdems.net](http://gratiotdems.net)